



2020 Ballot Propositions Voter Guide

☒ **YES** on Prop 15, Schools & Communities First

☒ **YES** on Prop 16, Opportunity for All

☒ **YES** on Prop 17, Free the Vote

☒ **NO** on Prop 20

☒ **YES** on Prop 21, Keep Families in their Homes

Yes on Prop 15 (Schools and Communities First)

Official Title: "Tax on Commercial and Industrial Properties for Education and Local Government Funding Initiative"

Endorsing Partners: Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment (ACCE), Causa Justa :: Just Cause (CJJC)

Details: *Prop 15 will raise an estimated \$12 billion a year for schools and community services by closing corporate tax loopholes.* Communities will be able to invest these funds in schools, community colleges, health and mental health care services, affordable housing, firefighters and their equipment, and fire preparedness. The proposition would amend the constitution to require commercial and industrial properties valued at more than \$3 million to pay property taxes on the current market value of their property, instead of the original purchase price. **Homeowners, renters, and small businesses will not be affected by Prop 15.**

- The majority of the revenue (92%) will be raised from the most expensive 10% of California's corporate properties.
- Prop 15 cuts small business taxes by eliminating the business personal property tax on equipment and fixtures up to \$500,000.
- Prop 15 requires public disclosure of all new revenues raised and how they are spent.

Why this Proposition is a Racial Justice Issue: Current tax policy makes it difficult for all California communities to raise funds through corporate property taxes, but wealthier communities can make up losses with private resources. Less affluent communities, whose residents are disproportionately people of color, are unable to collect the funds they need. This has led to major disparities between school districts, neighborhoods, and communities across California. Prop 15 would enable communities to raise the funds needed to ensure all Californians can thrive. It would also allow communities to collect more property tax revenue from wealthy corporations and reduce the inequitable burdens that other taxes place on low-income residents, who are disproportionately people of color. Without access to reliable property tax revenues, local governments have been forced to rely on other taxes and bonds to secure adequate funding. These taxes, including some of the highest sales taxes in the country, place a larger burden on low-income communities.

For more info/to get involved: Visit yes15.org; Sign up to phonebank with [San Francisco Rising and SURJ](#) every Mon, Tues, Thurs, or with [SURJ](#) alternating Tues/Weds.

Yes on Prop 16 (Opportunity for All)

Official Title: “Repeal Proposition 209, Affirmative Action Amendment”

Endorsing Partners: ACCE

Details: *Prop 16 would restore affirmative action so we can remove the barriers that keep our communities from thriving—with strong oversight and without quotas.* Prop 16 would repeal Prop 209, which banned affirmative action in California in 1996. Passing Proposition 16 would allow for the consideration of race, gender, and ethnicity in public hiring, admissions, and contracts. Prop 16 would:

- Permit government decision-making policies to consider race, sex, color, ethnicity, or national origin to improve diversity in public school admissions, public hiring, and government contracts.
- Not alter other state and federal laws guaranteeing equal protection and prohibiting unlawful discrimination.
- Not have any direct fiscal effect on state and local entities because the measure does not require any change to current policies or programs.

Why this Proposition is a Racial Justice Issue: The ban on affirmative action policies has disproportionately harmed Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC). For example, University of California admission rates for Black and Latino students have dropped 26% since the ban went into effect, and businesses owned by women and people of color lose \$1.1 billion annually in government contracts. By allowing the consideration of race and ethnicity in hiring, admissions, and contracts, Prop 16 will ensure more equal representation of BIPOC in our public universities, contracts, and admissions. It will also fight wage discrimination against women of color.

For more info and to get involved: Visit voteyesonprop16.org

Yes on Prop 17 (Free the Vote)

Official Title: “Voting Rights Restoration for Persons on Parole Amendment”

Endorsing Partners: Initiate Justice; All of Us Or None/Legal Services for Prisoners with Children; Ella Baker Center for Human Rights

Details: *Prop 17 would restore voting rights upon release from prison and will ensure that everyone who has completed their prison term can have their voice heard in our democracy.* The California Constitution currently prohibits people with felony convictions from voting while they are on parole. As a result, nearly 50,000 Californians who have returned home from prison can’t vote even though they are raising families, holding jobs, paying taxes, and contributing to society in every other way. These individuals are denied the opportunity to choose the representatives and shape the policies that impact their daily lives.

Why this Proposition is a Racial Justice Issue: Because of persistent and systematic biases and racial inequalities in our criminal legal system, people of color are more likely than others to be convicted of crimes and therefore lose their voting rights. Three out of four men leaving California prisons are Black, Latino, or Asian American. This means that California’s constitution disproportionately locks people of color out of the voting booth. Passing Prop 17 will combat voter suppression among over-policed Black and brown communities.

For more info/to get involved: Visit yeson17.vote

No on Prop 20

Official Title: “Criminal Sentencing, Parole, and DNA Collection Initiative”

Partners taking a NO position: Californians United for a Responsible Budget (CURB), Ella Baker Center for Human Rights, Legal Services for Prisoners with Children, and Initiate Justice

Details: *Prop. 20 would erase much of California’s recent criminal justice reform progress by increasing already overcrowded prison and jail populations, increasing taxpayer spending on carceral budgets by hundreds of millions of dollars, and stealing vital funding from community systems of care, prevention, and rehabilitation—programs that actually keep people safe.* Additionally, within five years, Prop. 20 would add \$2.3 billion in carceral spending to California’s already astronomical \$17 billion corrections budget.

Prop. 20 seeks to embed us more firmly in a culture of punishment. By undoing key aspects of Propositions 47, 57, and Assembly Bill 109 in one sweep, Prop. 20 would make it easier to charge low-level crimes like bicycle theft as a serious felony. Prop. 20 would drop the felony theft threshold from \$950 to \$250, and create a brand new set of felony crimes. For people inside prisons, Prop. 20 would restrict access to parole and rehabilitative programs, making it harder for them to earn credit towards release. This anti-reform initiative also violates privacy, requiring persons convicted of certain misdemeanors, like shoplifting, to submit to the collection of a DNA sample.

Why this Proposition is a Racial Justice Issue: Prop 20 would return California to the height of the “tough on crime” era, leading to more and more Black, Brown, Indigenous, and People of Color being caged.

For more information: Check out [this letter](#) from our partners and this [report](#) from the [Center of Juvenile and Criminal Justice \(CJCJ\)](#). Want to help phonebank to oppose this ballot proposition? Sign up for a phone bank training [here](#).

Yes on Prop 21 (Keep Families in their Homes)

Official Title: “The Rental Affordability Act”

Endorsing Partners: ACCE, Housing Now! Coalition

Details: *Prop 21 would give local communities more power to limit annual rent increases, preserve existing affordable housing, and prevent the ongoing displacement of low-income communities of color.* Prop 21 would reform current state law (the Costa–Hawkins Rental Housing Act) that limits the effectiveness of rent stabilization policies in California. Prop 21 would:

- **Allow local governments to limit rent increases on more rental homes than ever before, including single-family homes and buildings older than 15 years.** Current state law prevents local governments from rent stabilizing single-family home rentals and buildings built after 1995. However, there are more single-family home rentals than ever before. In the wake of the foreclosure crisis, many foreclosed homes were acquired by corporate investors and turned into rentals. As rents have skyrocketed, renters in single-family homes have had no protections against exorbitant rent increases.
- **Slow rent increases across communities by limiting rent hikes on empty units.** Currently, landlords have no limitations on how high they can raise rent between tenants, so they are incentivized to evict long-term tenants. Prop 21 will help keep housing costs down for all renters while reducing unjust evictions that disproportionately impact renters of color in gentrifying communities.

Prop 21 does not impose rent control across California; it empowers communities to enact policies that can protect the millions of renters who spend the majority of their incomes on rent.

Why this Proposition is a Racial Justice Issue: Decades of housing discrimination have denied Black communities equal access to homeownership, meaning that they are more likely to be renters. As a result, the dramatic increases in rent throughout the state have a disproportionate impact on Black residents and other people of color, resulting in Black Californians representing a disproportionately large share of people experiencing homelessness. Prop 21 would allow local governments to enact policies that stabilize communities of color who are most impacted by the current displacement crisis.

For more info/to get involved: Visit yeson21ca.org and read this [endorsement from the LA Times](#).

Why Don't I See Other Propositions?

This voting guide is not intended to be comprehensive. As an organization focused on organizing white people into taking action as part of multi-racial coalitions for racial justice, we believe it is essential we follow the lead of our BIPOC-led partners when it comes to determining strategy and positions. For this reason, this ballot proposition guide features only propositions on which our [BIPOC-led partners](#) have taken formal positions, are in clear alignment, and that our chapter has subsequently voted to endorse.

Of course, there are many other propositions that have significant implications for racial justice. We recognize the importance of these propositions, while also acknowledging that it is not our role to provide guidance on these subjects. We urge you to continue your research so that you can take informed positions on the ballot propositions not featured in this guide.